

The Americanization of the Unconscious: Twenty Years Later

John R. SEELEY

Charles R. Drew Postgraduate Medical School

In order to speak of the "Americanization of the Unconscious: Twenty Years Later," it is necessary briefly to summarize what—then in those almost halcyon days—was there advanced and argued.

Most striking, perhaps, was the tone of the essay. It seemed not inept to utter and publish something in a tone, if not exactly light and lighthearted, at least sufficiently lit by rays of reasonable hope, intended as an acceptably genteel invitation to acceptably genteel people—psychologically oriented ones (principally sociologists and anthropologists)—to join forces, to develop one single praxis, and out of that praxis a unified theory of human life, with the presumably reasonable expectation that, rightly done, that life might (in that generalized enterprise), be changed for the appreciably better.

The original essay, bearing this recommendation as its collegial call to arms and conclusion, was preceded and undergirded by an intendedly factual description, and an historic and cultural analysis of how Freud (less as person and more as evangel-bearer) came to America, was met in an embrace more ardent, fateful and fatal than anything he had encountered anywhere else, while his message, as heard, was transformed and transmogrified, and invaginated into the center of the culture and the core of the character, into the conscious thought and unconscious substrate of the American psyche itself. So strikingly and strongly so, it was held, as to justify as title to characterize the process, "The Americanization of the Unconscious." However felicitous or infelicitous that title, a serious attempt was made to describe, and then discuss how and why and with what consequence, the psychoanalytic viewpoint, albeit trimmed, truncated, vulgarized and sweetened, came so much, so deeply and so soon to peruse American thought, practice (whether propaganda, pedagogy or parenting), art, self-image, and—in due course, since form follows function—the very structure of the self that thus perceived (and thereby constituted) becomes both the observing and the empirical or experienced self itself.

This more-than-oral, this pan-official, incorporation of Freudian "generalized" doctrine in America, was set in sharp contrast to European behavior, which was at best reception-without-inception—the recognition, if that, of a specialized strand of thought and practice, narrowly restricted to the care, cure or relief of the *Geistes-Kranken*, the spirit-sick (not in the sense in which we all are that, but in the sense that a miniscule minority, elected and self-elected, are segregated or separated out to bear that badge and burden for us). *Geistes-Nahrung*, the nourishment of the mind, pedagogy or enculturation, went on there, unlike here, (social class for social class), much as before: one might know about Freud or psychoanalysis as one "knew about" Hegel and dialectic; but one did not "believe in" him or it (or "disbelieve" in him or it either), in the sense of substantially guiding everyday life by it, or, consciously and unconsciously, explicitly or implicitly, grounding everyday life in it. From the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, therefore, virtually nothing appreciably flowed into the conduct or experience of everyday life. Here, however, to a very large extent, especially for the middle-class, especially in the intelligentsia, everyday life was appreciably transformed, if only by the taking up of that view of it virtually *ab initio* ontogenetically, almost ingredient in the mother's milk (even that restored in fond flow by what seemed to recommend itself on his views on "orality").

Out of all the elements that might have been deemed consequential for this effloration from consulting-room cult, first to a current of thought, and then to a social-movement of quasi-religious force and nature, two elements present on the American scene and relatively absent on the European were selected for attention.

The first, was America's bewitched and bewildered fascination with its own, partly on that account, ever-changing, image. To quote the original essay:

America is the world's Wonderland. In all the shadings and nuances of the word, she is before all others the world's producer of wonders, and a matter herself of wonder to the alien, and, *a fortiori*, to herself. Amazed and amazing, bewildering and bewildered, fascinating and utterly fascinated as she sees herself, either directly or reflected in the eyes of others, inexhaustible in her

*This paper owes much to discussion with my friends and colleagues, Drs. Alfred Katz, Terry Kupers, George Seeds; though they are not responsible for its remaining shortcomings.

variation, beyond plumbing in her subtlety, incrustable, unfathomable. . . . Words fail, but interest never flags. Of only one thing can we be sure: that the face she presents to the world—the simple, plain-spoken, direct, homely, straightforward, practical face—is the least of her aspects and serves chiefly to conceal the complexity within complexity that is characteristically hers, and beside which China seems patent and India obvious. The myth of simplicity which she has woven about herself and persuaded others to weave about her serves as a penetrable mantle that calls attention most to what it is ostensibly designed to conceal.

At least three other tendencies were also then noted which, together, seemed to conspire to draw the couch-originated conceptions and perceptions of the consulting-room out into the common currency of the culture, certainly into the “high culture” of the creators and critics, the intelligentsia, and even into the middle-brow, mainstream, white, middle-middle-class culture of the school, the social work agency, the home, the whole series of increasingly self-conscious persons and institutions “caring for” persons, in all the multiple meanings of that altogether-too-laden term. The tendencies—not unconnected—were, first, the existence and rapid growth and proliferation of what claimed to be social and psychological sciences, asserting hegemonic claims as exclusive royal roads to the understanding of humanity *qua* human, and the cure or mitigation of its major (if not minor) ills; second, the nearly universal acceptance of the view that all human stress or distress is reducible to a mere “problem” (or set of problems) capable in principle of solution, and, in practice (given enough means and money), proximately so; and, lastly, the presence, in an ostensibly ultra-practical, pragmatic, and plan-and-program-devoted society, of an indefeasible and perennial, secular or sacred, religious quest, and an unremitting search for the ulterior secret that would transfigure human life—not merely transform, in “disjointed incremental” fashion, its everyday manifestations.

The original essay, as some of you may recall, ended on a somewhat Manichean note of hope and warning, poising and posing the forces of darkness against the forces of light, Eros against Thanatos: the emergence out of all this of a most irresistibly mutually manipulative society—if such a way of life merits the dignity of that term—or of a most mutually sustaining, humane, and humanity-fostering, community of communities, institutionalizing and otherwise incorporating, appreciation—in all its senses,—a community of persons in their collectivity and their severalty, as seen, not merely (as in previous eras) in breadth, but as revealed in depth, in the compassionate realism and realistic compassion, that, at its best, forms and informs, psychoanalytic theory, practice and experience.

It is true that I balanced, even then, on the side of warning: “The dice are heavily loaded in

favor of the latter risk, the risk of catastrophe, by the American devotion to mastery as the *Deus deorum*.”

But, in retrospect, I think, not sufficiently monitory.

For one thing, I insufficiently noted, within the psychoanalytic movement a tendency to self-encapsulation, based precisely on what psychoanalytic theory itself should have warned us against: an excessive attempt, based presumably on splitting rather than integrating its sensed ‘good’ and ‘bad’ potencies, in an effort to retain a kind of pristine purity, or the seeming or semblance of it, by using the club of orthodoxy to keep analysis within the consulting room, and all else clearly out.

The essay is now fifteen to twenty years old, and the questions are as to what has ensued since that time—in history or autobiography or both—what defects, describable then and merely deficiencies of analysis, or describable only in the light of subsequent unfolding events are now identifiable and definable, and what now are, or seem to be, the present, proximate and ulterior prospects.

Let me say quite frankly, first, that I am surprised that I did not take more seriously and pursue to its painful conclusion the consequences of my own analysis. If, as I did even then, I noted as most characteristic of this country, a radical narcissism, feeding and flowing out of a fanciful belief, corresponding to a profoundest wish-thought, a belief in and commitment to a “science of man” giving us—whom?—the same “control” over self and society that we had “achieved” (to our near destruction) over all other Nature, and a conjunction, always unresolved, of low and directionless “pragmatism” with high and ungrounded, just short of fanatic, secular-socio-politic religiosity, why did I not draw the appropriate conclusions as to the overwhelming pattern of pathology? Why did I not see the almost infinite capacity for “dissociation” intimately involved with the narcissism; the megalomania that would extrapolate from theory of social theory to political practice of political practice; the imminent collapse of such a precarious organization of psychological and social and cultural forces? Why did I not see—particularly since I had for four decades warned against the possibility—that “insight” would be turned almost solely to the uses of “intelligence,” in the military or warfare (that *is* the control) sense; that if push came to shove we would prefer plenipotentiary control without insight even to partial control by means of it; that the very latent *attendrissement* that attends growing understanding would be exploited for its uses, since while tenderness is life, it is also vulnerability; that the very subtlety of psychoanalytic theory and practice, balancing so delicately in every given case between biological and social causation

on one side and the potential for personal responsibility on the other, would be one-sidedly exploited in the interests of the general ideology of the "self-made man," in an attempt to psychologize all social problems from "hyperactivity," to political resistance, to poverty; and, that push *would* come to very violent shove in the then most proximate future as war and Watergate and the like revealed plainly the normally better covered-over and covert contradictions of late capitalist—or as they preferred to call it, post-industrial—society?

It is, in fact, as if I had caught sight of a possibility and limned it, in the very instant of its vanishment. Surely I should have guessed that in a nation that knows the uses of everything and the use of nothing, where even—or perhaps particularly—the sacred or sacrosanct sees service in what Trungpa Rinpoché in *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* calls "spiritual materialism"—perhaps better entitled spiritual capitalism—the psychoanalytic spirit had dim chance of survival, unless it could be turned—one way to opiate, or the other way to weapon,—failing which it would be abandoned or "neutralized".

Indeed, I need not even have greatly guessed. If in every epoch, at least generally and in the long run, the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class, and if, whatever that class (as long as classes exist), the ruling idea is to rule, and if rule implies, as it does, domination when hegemony no longer serves—i.e., precisely when a new form ripens in the womb of history—then *any* potent idea-system must serve that rule, vanquish it, or perish. And since psychoanalysis never self-consciously—despite my pleas, and others' from Wilhelm Reich on—seriously addressed itself even to a role of ally in the second enterprise, it could but be left to "choose" the first or third, or both. The very fact that psychoanalysis did have the revolutionary potential I and others claimed for it would not go unnoticed by the intelligence system that everywhere surrounds unwarranted power. The strategic question that would present itself there would be precisely how to ensure the taming of such potentially countervailing power, how to make certain that psychoanalytic capacity to tender the crumbs of person-by-person pain-relief or pleasure-increase or reconciliation to "reality" would be made to prevail over its more explosive possibilities as a vantage point for the critique of that manufactured and interest-distorted and population-depotentiating reality. These pressures—not separable from the fact of the fatal marriage in this country of psychoanalysis to psychiatry, and psychiatry to medicine—were not difficult to exert—indeed required nothing much more than the subtleties of selective attention and inattention, and the retained right, above all, to accredit, license, legitimize in both the moral and the legal orders.

To ask why I did not reach that bleak conclusion then is perhaps rhetorical. Perhaps we *were* historically in a moment of evanescent hope. Perhaps I was peculiarly susceptible. Perhaps I coupled my general monitory overtones with the undertone of positive possibility in the expectation that only thus, slightly sugared, would the warning be heard by all. I do not know. In any case, what is of primary importance is not what I personally saw or foresaw, but how in fact events unfolded, and what can be seen, or seen more clearly, from our present vantage-point in history.

It is true that I stated the condition for hope strongly, even then,

Only if we can bring out of the consulting room into society (as well as the ideas we have already brought out) the intelligent affection that contains and domesticates the otherwise threatening possibilities of insight, only if we can institutionalize these in public life (revolutionizing other institutions in the process if necessary) can we hope that we have called out the forces of life rather than tapped upon the door of death's angel. Insight is mere technique: Eros and Thanatos still dispute whose, and their representatives in us will determine.

The "intelligent affection?" "Institutionalized in public life?" "Revolutionizing other institutions?" It is almost impossible to recapture the time, the place, the experiences, the visions that made these even conditional conditions seriously, let alone sustainedly, envisionable. But they were there—had been there—not for me alone, but for many who had publicly shared in certain public enterprises and experiences—and the moment of hope, if not fully justified, was far from ungrounded. It was not utterly unreasonable to see, in the existing pervasion and perfusion in some times and places of some institutions by psychoanalytically-derived insight and the "psychoanalytic spirit" compatible benignity of intent, purpose—and sometimes accomplishment—the possibility, if not probability, of a social movement, a social and psychological movement, that might begin the long, slow process of transformation of persons and societies toward some asymptotic relation to the humane possibilities co-existent with the most inhumane in humanity. This is not the place to detail such experiences and evidences—they seemed patently present or perceptibly emergent in the spread of new ways of parenting, teaching, therapy, perceptions of self and other, prefigured in poetry and literature, precariously, but nevertheless, initially incarnate in many persons and some institutions, moving seemingly like a slow tide—not without counter-currents—powerfully within history. There was certainly more ground for so hope-believing than there could have been in pre- (or even post-) Constantine Rome for thinking that the Church

would inherit the mantle and rear itself upon the ruins of the Empire, or that in Greece "... in place of chant, the wail of Galileans" would make "the whole world moan with hymns of wrath and wrong." But, if these warrants for hope were sensible to me and others, then they were also visible, but as threats to the going order, by others, otherwise placed socially, and otherwise socially, politically and morally intentioned.

The course that history was proximately—and is perhaps permanently—to follow, was not merely a right-angle turn, or a course at a 180 degrees of arc antipodal to that indicated, but in a plane and along a dimension orthogonal to those lines thus lying. For while it is true that what the sixties brought us was predominantly hate (intelligent and unintelligent) clearly triumphant over, but at least in the same plane as, "intelligent affection," even using insight as the learned knife to castrate or back-stab its victims (*vide*, e.g., Feuer's use of it as unconcealed weapon¹), it is even more striking that the seventies have brought us into a quieter time of destruction, where perhaps, indeed, ideology (in America) is ended, problems of policy are beyond good and evil, love and hate (except in the most abstract form), matters of "administration," the near-total reign at last of the *Beamtenregierung*, the era of domination by accredited officers, bureaucracy, at last, full-fashioned, Max Weber's iron Cage.²

Indeed the sixties began with something like a fulfillment, or manifestation *in embryo*, of the power pictured as conditionally possible, at the end of the original essay. The insights that stemmed largely from the psychoanalytic understanding, *had* sufficiently perfused the consciousness or indeed, as predicted, the unconscious presumptions, of some large part of at least the relatively affluent middle-class white young—both directly from their now distinct "culture" and indirectly from the incorporation of such views in their very nurture, nursing and nature—that *their* intelligent affection appeared on both the personal and political planes, and, most often, on an undivided personal-political one, in, initially, sharp distinction from, and then, increasingly, accelerated and heightened opposition to, the actuality and animus of nearly every major going institution and accompanying cultural belief and defense system. The ability to perforate façade, to puncture pretense, to pierce *persona* or mask, personal or political, in institutional arrangements or cultural forms, came as "naturally" to a generation for whom, diluted or not, the psychopathology of everyday life was a point of departure, genuinely a datum, something given, rather than a point of conclusion, a *factum*, as

the manufacture of such masks and pretense-systems had been to their ancestors, immediate and remote. Not that they were thus rendered magically immune from pretense-making or mask-manufacture in their own way in their own case—but that the metabolic and katabolic processes came nearer some sort of balance, or rather tipped favorably against almost any deceit including that most alluring form, personal or collective self-deceit. And that in the process they discovered almost accidentally the potency of speaking truth to power, when the material base for doing so, that their parents had so abjectly lacked, was handed to them almost unnoticed on an all-but-silver platter.

Nor was it only that they became possessed of or into possession of unparalleled diagnostic potency—in the literal sense of "diagnosis," a *gnosis* or direct knowledge, seen *through* the presentment—but that, thus aware, with consciousness heightened and deepened, they moved onto the stage of history, virtually vacated in terms of responsible action as they understood it, by almost all their elders—as would-be incarnations and incarnators of a more humane order, internal and external.

Beginning, with almost uncanny precision, with the problem that most notably embodies and plays out the most deeply-veiled and darkest side of the American character—the continuation into our own age of a caste-like minimum feasible attenuation of slavery—and continuing on, discovering continuity and consistency as they went, into those alleged very towers of light (signs, signals, symbols, and embodiments of the ego) the Universities, not sparing the intimate recesses of even the "ideal" family, nor the more blatant excesses in the distribution of potency and impotence, political, economic, cultural or institutional, they moved across the moral landscape, analyzing, exposing, reflecting, acting, at risk and under adversity, at least to destabilize the going order of consecrated iniquities, at most, by example, personal and collective, and by action hortatory, dramatic or political, in order to bring a new order into imminence or actuality. And clearly a new order (a new order public and a new order private, i.e., new personalities in newly configured social structures and spaces) more responsive both to the nature of human nature, roughly as perceived in the psychoanalytical-theoretical perspective, and to its plenary potentialities as revealed, in process and product, by the best of psychoanalytic practice.

The Movement, always fluid and moving mostly in most hectic tempo amid the most hectic events, partly its context and partly its consequence, had uncertain bounds and broad divisions, at least in emphasis, within whatever gave it its sensed, if somewhat amorphous, unity. On one of its wings, a primarily psychologically, personally, small-group and communally-oriented

¹Lewis S. Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations*, New York: Basic Books, 1969.

²Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1969.

body, touched the center at one tip, but bled off at the other into a vast variety of personal "growth," "strength" or "enrichment" fragments, at some points reaching the extreme in which any "new" experience from abstinence to orgy, from psychedelic "trip" to the trip into death or dissolution, from out-of-the-body-travel to into-the-body-self-grounding, came to be seen as valuable, either *per se* as new experience, or intrinsically or extrinsically in virtue of its capacity to "blow the mind" of participants, or willing or unwilling spectators. On its other wing, a primarily politically oriented body, also touched the center at one tip, but bled off at the other into an endless fission and factionalization of parties, proto-parties and petty (though often potent) action-elements, like the Weathermen, their successors, heirs, assigns, spinoffs, imitators, and, of course, infiltrators, not excluding FBI saboteurs, provocateurs, disruptors and informers and deformers. And in the center, pressed upon by the two wings, as well as by all the opponents, open and covert, and their own internal stresses, stood a body committed to the betterment of society, but not at the expense of persons or the narrowing and impoverishment of personality, *and* the bettering of persons and primary groups, but not at the expense of or even by reduction of the effort to create a better (i.e., more just, more free, more joyous) society in America, and the world, the Third World, in particular, not excluded.

This is not the place or time, I am sure, to chronicle the details of the life, birth and death of the Movement—"victorious" in some ways, in the minimum sense that some of the policies or practices it advocated of fought for were finally adopted (in some cases because of its influences, in some cases for fear of perpetuating a profound division at the core of American life, in some cases because it had become expedient or prudent on quite other grounds—as, e.g., with the withdrawal from Vietnam, when continued presence there had ceased to be even "good business"). Actually I believe the Movement has left us with no mean legacy—cultural, institutional-political, ethical-exemplary, social-dramatic—though it is by no means clear how we, the heirs, will spend or squander the heritage. Probably, because of the Movement's life, no institution will be quite the same again, in some very significant, if not central, sense. But, equally probably, because of its death a critical or crucial or core transformation of person or society, let alone both, is, if anything, more unlikely—certainly further away. I do not suppose I have to demonstrate the death of the Movement—though many of my best friends from that era, and best positioned to know and assess the present, argue that the death is temporary, the necessary period of gathering force deep in the personal and social undergrounds (where alone can be found the new *sub-stances* or *under-standings*) preparatory to

resurrection, renewal and the giving of form, firm and fresh, to what was previously fluidly only prepared for. Such a sequence—or view of the ongoing sequence—is entirely possible, but meanwhile we have to live with the Movement enshrouded and entombed, whatever forces may be gathering to roll away whatever rocks from its sepulcher.

It would be easy enough, as I indicated, to account for this demise of what looked to many like the beginning—indeed the actuality, *in nuce*—of a revolution at once cultural and personal, political and economic, moral and social, in terms of the forces (literal armed forces to metaphorical economic, social and political forces), marshalled, deployed and organized against it. As the whole Watergate, actualities and cover stories, unfolded and were un-covered and dis-covered, and as, following these disclosures, the prior acts that made plain that key officials would rather sacrifice the Constitution and, in effect, embrace the hindquarters of any available and potentially-saving political demon (whether modelled on Hitler or Stalin or new inventions) than move toward fulfillment of the promise ever-present and ever dangerously renewed in the standard American rhetoric—the mass and extent, the depth and force of these deployments becomes more evident, even as it provides a measure of the solidity and determination (as well as the fragility and frantic quality) of that which the Movement had cast and mobilized itself against. It would also be easy to point to the destructive role of neutrals or allies—the media, for example, even when most "sympathetic"—or of the internal strains within or between the Movement's main "wings", or even smaller divisions and subdivisions.

But this is not what I want to do here, both because I have done it before on so many other occasions, in so many other times and places, and, positively, because I believe this presentation before the Academy invites, if not requires, a more specific linking of origin and outcome to psychoanalysis.

It is not that it is historically uncommon in our societies for the young to conclude from the discrepancies between adults' pretensions and performances to their "hypocrisy," deceitfulness or worse. And it is true that public—and precedently and postcedently, private—life in America, lay in the sixties, in peculiarly patent disarray. Thus we should have expected "protest", perhaps even public disorder, in any case.

What made the decade's "Movement" distinct in origin and course, what gave it its almost uncanny selection and definition and connection of "Causes"—final causes, not efficient ones—what made it able to find resonances so profound among its proponents and participants, and vulnerabilities so precise and painful among its opponents, was its psychological, self-insightful,

other-perceptive, psychodynamically profound, essentially psychoanalytic sophistication, whether "conscious" or not—together with an affluence—supported but not wealth-determined, radical honesty—the two taken together constantly seeking and offering truth against the force of and full in the face of ideology. Such orientations ran so general, "natural" and deep, they barely needed our jargon, though they did not altogether neglect it. One hardly needed a peculiarly sensitive third ear to hear loud and clear in their songs and stories—a new minstrelsy having emerged with the new Movement—depiction of an essentially psychoanalytic landscape. The symbols chosen in the mass of generated literature—from the Oracle, through the Communications Company's communications, to the heavier literature of policy-analysis, or agitation—the acting in the new everyday life, as well as in the more formal theater of marches, demonstrations, Pentagon elevations, love-ins, be-ins, nude-ins, teach-ins, smoke-ins—the symbols worn, grown, celebrated, empoemed—departed from and found their peculiar and devastating delegitimizing impact in view of psychoanalytic perception, so everyday as to be almost instinct, but so novel in history as to offer no compare. The new young, in part parented by the media, were all but able to command the media, which in turn became the vulnerable adults' primary definition of reality—not in virtue of some perverse desire on the part of communications-owners to undermine their own Corporate foundations, but by the fascination indeed always exercised by those expert in the use of those deepest symbols that reach past the ordinary defenses to stir and trouble the murkier regions of and the darker objects in the unconscious. The songs of that era alone will bear the weight of the argument: drawn from depths not previously commonly accessible, finding almost immediately a new but immediately understood *lingua franca*, speaking deeply to those who would hear, and despite defense, to those who would rather not, they spoke almost directly from unconscious to unconscious about unconscious, straining thus, as intended, the constraints of repression, social as well as psychological.

It needs perhaps to be added that those who had all but imbibed the psychoanalytic perspective with their mothers' milk had loosened their milk teeth not much later on a vast variety of sociologies, either directly, or as film and fiction became sociologized after they had become psychologized. And this too, particularly in its unmasking of interest, its general theory of ideology, was, in the crunch, to be of not inconsiderable aid to the tearing aside of veils, and the rending of fabrics woven about the shaky body, the corpus or corpse of claims to social, moral and political legitimacy. The new young needed no special arguments to convince them that, contrary to convention, social analysis is intrinsically

a kind of political method, and they thus assumed, and used it at need.

But what they—and the world—really needed in the historic hour was not to be had: an adequately worked out conjuncture of a politically formed and informed psychology and a psychologically formed and informed political theory and practice. And for those who would accept neither the sacrifice of self for the sake of society nor society for the sake of self in the search for a revolutionary pathway, there was nowhere to turn but to fallible—and finally failed—improvisation and spontaneity at the point of most critical psychological and political need. A theory and practice of personal and social transformation—a single process, separable into two only at the price of almost guaranteed abortion for both—was as unavailable then as when called for decade after decade—and just as studiously ignored on both sides—almost from the birth of psychoanalysis, on. Despite heroic attempts by many of the engaged persons or groups, in action and in anguish, to incarnate at least examples in praxis, with theory to follow, in their own lives, the half-century or more of neglect could not be made up *ambulando*, and retreat was beat or defeat was encountered on the personal or political front or both.

In this unfolding of events and in that dawning realization—since what is not part of the solution *is*, in the desperate crisis of a moral and social order, a part of the problem—an alienation from, a disaffection for, an antipathy toward the "politically neutral" (hence, effectively, *pro statu quo*) psychoanalytic corpus grew up, and, festering, prospered. It was as though the analytic movement's moment in history had been missed—the moment when it could have been, in rebirth, momentous for humankind. It was as though the analytic movement's hegemony over self-definition had come and gone in the same instant.

Meanwhile, not at public but at professional level, the moment had also, probably with near-simultaneity, been lost either in the instant of its gaining, or perhaps even before it had been fully gained. And for essentially the same reason, but seen from the opposite perspective. In principle, the still apolitical nature of psychoanalysis should have permitted it as readily under the right circumstances to be gathered into the armamentarium of social and political repression, into the service of the police arm of the State (or the State becoming ever more police State) as any other "value-neutral" psychological (or social) technique. And the uneasy and unhallowed alliance of psychoanalysis with psychiatry with which its Americanization began, should have given even easier room for such development.

But psychoanalysis was to be spared—not without cost—such blatant recruitment, in part because of a distinctive strength which would be

seen from the State's perspective as an in-built ineptitude. The distinct strength—intrinsic, albeit fragile—lies in the basic commitment of psychoanalysis in theory and practice to the liberation of the person. It is difficult—not impossible—to reconcile “where [the tyranny of] . . . id was, ego shall be,” with “by our help, where the tyranny of id was shall be the tyranny of reconditioning in the State's interest”—or with the institution of a rewired brain, or of a drug-imprisoned one in the same interest. (I have already made the point that it did not escape wholly blameless, and I must make the further point that it is far from out of danger. Its very refusal to take part in, and its basic ineptitude for crude, crass and clear repressive uses, still leave it open to the possibilities of deeper-reaching, because more subtle, definitions of the real, the sane, the credible and creditable, in the interest of a deeper, because psychological as well as social repression.) But for now, the very commitment and method of psychoanalysis, happily renders out-comes humanly uncertain—as in standard theology, one cannot ask simultaneously for human freedom *and* for the certain victory of any given set of gods.

In contrast, with those who live by the liberative art of psychoanalysis, for those who view the problem of human healing or whole-making—with its strangely unhuman view of what it is to be human—as a *science* (in the traditional sense), there is no bar or barrier, at least in principle, to supplying what the State—or the comfort, status or interest of the profession—might demand.

The moment in history was right for these eclectics, psychobiologists, brain-surgeons, psychopharmacologists, *behavior* modifiers to seize, if they would, the dizzying tendered dominion, little short of the kingdoms of this world, and all but all that in them lies, which the State could in the late sixties and seventies offer and did, in exchange for service to it at first, almost wholly unadulterated, and, later, patently total. For some of these, essentially scientist-engineers of behavior, the Hippocratic Oath or some personal qualms of conscience, would bar the way, but nothing intrinsic to their “discipline,” would offer any difficulty. Indeed, in a discipline conceived as a “science of behavior,” since the problem must be to determine the cause of behavior (all human conduct except theirs now reduced to this infra-human status), and to test the determinacy by demonstrating it (since the test, that is, is the demonstration of effective control of effects), the only residual question that can lie, unless still more cruelly random curiosity animates the enterprise, is control of what effects (first) in whose interest (primarily?). And to those questions the State, using the patent coercion of contracts in one hand, and constricted support-funds in the other, offered easy, immediate and unconscionable answers.

The negative mental gymnastics that would have to be employed to draw lines, in the sight of colleagues, between these Eichmannesque enterprises, actual and proposed, programs to be put in motion, or researches begun or turned more firmly to such uses, remained to unfold in time and detail, but did so with great rapidity early in the current decade. But the issues—despite the worst arguments by the best minds—were relatively plain to see. With Patuxent as long-standing model, no one should think that anyone is conjuring with phantasms or gaming with ghosts. Money in almost unlimited flow from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, available under *contract* for such purposes, in a time of right-wing-sponsored outcry for “law and order” would, like a sort of abstract alcohol, prove a solvent for many a previously sensitive conscience, and a weapon for those power-holders in the profession to hold over, if not use upon, those less powerful, most of them so since conscience and power are ever commonly such uneasy companions. We just failed by a hair to see the public spectacle of the mighty American Psychiatric Association defining its own character and position in the matter by electing to its Presidency a protagonist-in-Chief of at least the principles involved. (The widespread inability, manifested in so many American Psychiatric Association stands, to grasp social and political realities and relationships surely as much deserves a code-number and category in the psychiatric nology, as do such alleged conditions as psychopathy, sociopathy, anti-social character, and the like.) One hallmark of the part “profession” or new profession is their willingness—nay eagerness—to take categories of persons or actions that are not even remotely, on their face or in their depths, medical or psychological or “psychiatric,” indeed not categories in any science or discipline—mere administrative categories like “delinquent,” “criminal,” “economically” dependent (code-word for poor), “incorrigible,” “slow-learner,” “overactive child” and (with or without the latinizing or graecisizing of their titles for camouflage) engage, or offer to engage, in the “prevention, treatment and cure” of the newly constituted—by legal fiat—supposedly medical-psychological “condition.” Note here, however, that “prevention,” carries over from ordinary medicine its kindly meaning of stopping something, like the plague, that no one wants, by extension to such acts as petty theft or refusal to accede to nonsensical school regulations, where the meaning “slips, so that “prevention” now means unconstitutional “prior restraint,” and “cure” means the crushing of the authority-discomfiting conduct. Perhaps as comic-tragic a story as any to come out of this mind-set (in the same geographical locus) was the alleged use of cattle-prods on cross-dressing or otherwise gender-identity-problematic little boys, but not little

girls, on the view that the latter were less "sick" because, eventually, (grown up), there is more of a *market* (or so the responsible professional believed) for "masculinized" women than there is for "effeminized" men.

Though S.T.A.R.T. and a number of similar actual or attempted State-serving, repressive, "psychiatric" action or research programs came to an end, largely in virtue of public outcry more than professional outrage, a skirmish had been won, not a battle, let alone a war, decided. But the ally the ruling class seeks, and will probably seduce or, at need, abduct, in its desire, while monopolizing force, to economize, cosmeticize and subtilize its evident use, is exactly the science of human behavior, with emphasis on the scientific over the humanist ingredient, that some large part of undifferentiated psychiatry declares itself to be or to be in the process of becoming.

Since psychoanalysis lends itself less—indeed somewhat unready—to such uses, it becomes at least for the moment, spinster in this sphere of powerful social marriages, and thus to a degree "irrelevant" to the struggle mounting toward crisis for the next revolutionary phase in the life of humanity or for its indefinite delay, crippling, and the assurance that when it does come it must come with more blood, death and suffering later, than would be the case, in any case, belated as it is, even now. (But remember the respite may be temporary, till the interests see their interest in a cleaner, gentler, less easily defeasible, and, therefore, more destructive, counter-revolutionary potential. Intimidation through interpretation is a tool of potential repression whose time may yet come. And the very absence of *patent* complicity of psychoanalysis with repression may make the fact, when fully appreciated, the more potent for sapping political-economic-personal resistance.

So we must not too readily congratulate ourselves that, in virtue of a certain happy uselessness, we have not "let ourselves be used" by either side. The two parties are not at parity, humanly, politically or morally. The "uselessness" is not intrinsic to psychoanalysis. The desperate urgency for it to find its political roots and risk its political fruits is more urgent than when I called for a conjuncture of a political alliance with every voluntary therapeutic alliance years ago—and years before that, better men and women, before me. There is, I assume, maintain and have attempted to demonstrate no intrinsic or inherent obstacle to *one* liberating discipline, that nurtures and motivates the change in human beings, which in turn, makes available the power, the desire and determination to change for the better those inhuman aspects of the human condition imposed by humans acting collectively in history—and so in an endless dialectic, as every gain in either opens up a new, a self-commending, horizon of better things to be for better beings in a better order.

That is not a mere utopian dream. It is the stark alternative to an order, based also on psychological and social scientific knowledge, beside which 1984 and *Terminal Man* pale, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* becomes not a representation of the latent essence of the going social order, but a faint foreshadowing and forecast of the order that is to come, with not only hope, but the very hope of hope, "like a god self-slain on his own strange altar," dead.

Perhaps our hour has already passed; our moment, gone. If not, the time in which to seize it diminishes at an ever-accelerating rate. The now or never for a politically relevant psychoanalysis may be, is almost surely, the now or never for the liberative process in history itself. It is a now or never that will not much longer constitute a present, open, choice.

ENVOI

The twenty-year retrospect in the article above appears exactly as delivered to The American Academy of Psychoanalysis.

It is now no more than twenty days old.

And already I would like to rewrite it.

I would like to rewrite it because it represents *in petto* the very sins and errors to which, in the large, it draws attention.

Less hopeful than the original, true. But still hopeful beyond warrant. Greeted with enthusiasm and warmth—as had been predecessor cries, warnings and intercessions of similar character over several years—the paper certainly had an effect.

But not, I think, the effect intended. At the focus of awareness, the effect intended was to proclaim the lateness of the hour and the minuscule magnitude of the chances that a theory and practice, under other conditions potentially liberative, would nevertheless struggle self-critically to bring those "other conditions" about, failing which assimilation to, if not a role of leadership in, the forces of political-social-economic-psychological repression could hardly fail to occur. So I left a crack, a fine, fine fissure, hesitating even now, to declare sealed the shell of the cosmic egg.

Why?

Well, in part, because it is a social form. Some large part of my auditors are my friends and colleagues and companions, brothers and sisters, often comrades in earlier struggles for positive and humane goods, in battles against more blatantly repressive forces. Evils robbed of eventuation, or even materially delayed, are not to be despised, and those who worked with me or with whom I worked in these ways in those days, who held fast to at least some minima of decency in what they struggled for and how they strug-

gled for it, are not lightly to be flung away, easily to be alienated. On their twentieth birthday, I could hardly wantonly or with abandon bring them "bitter bread to eat, and bitter tears to shed."

So again—albeit so slightly—I stayed my hand, and stilled my voice. The hand should have written and the voice cried clearly: it is over: the moment is gone: the sword or the scalpel was not apt to its task, could clear no space in the social jungle, could slay no predators, nor arm new comrades freed, formed and informed to do so.

It is over.

The moment is gone.

The tool is not apt to the task.

History has moved on. The chance is passed by. Those "watersprings that spake are quenched and dead".

And not alone those, of course. What psychoanalysis and psychology promised, "political science," and sociology and their sister disciplines and derived technologies pledged and promised twice over. Really, I supposed that reason, even if only by noting its bounds and declaring and describing the whole vast domain of unreason, would bring us toward the light. Not, of course, floating free of history or as independent of the horizontal cast along the vertical path of history, that, at any given moment in any given place, we call "society." And not reason alone, of course. But reason engaged. Reason in struggle. Reason, born of it, bearing it, borne of it, focused by it, each grounded in the other. And the struggle? The struggle for those humane conditions that alone would let us be human, those humane persons who would make human, within the undefined existential limits, the human condition.

I can find no warrant, now, desperately as I might wish one, for saying that that is the way it is to be. Or might yet well be. What would I not give to be able to believe that "... the shades are about us that hover, When darkness is half withdrawn, And the skirts of the dead night cover, The face of the live new dawn."

What dawn? And how would we know it?

If there is a credible utopian vision I do not know it. If there is a sketch even of a credible theory of how to get from here to some appreciably better there, I do not see it. If there is a praxis—except in literal or figurative islets, irrelevant to the teeming, pullulating grand continents—I have not heard of it. When the words "... with a human face" are tacked on to the name of any large-scale social system, theorists, if they are serious, stand mute; persons of power and practicality glance, furtive, over their shoulders.

If even we were at the point before the point of beginning. If agreeably, looking here, we could see with one eye and say with one voice "not here," and looking there "not there," "not this way," "not that way," "not that way either," if

we knew even that we stumbled blind in increasing dark... we would be light-years ahead. Instead, the false prophets multiply, the followers cannot distinguish life from death, or even the truth of their experience from ideology or wish-borne illusion. All cry "Lo, hither" or "Lo yon" or "Lo thither," and seem equicredible, and the worst confound all counsel as they depart all sense, saying "Look, we are here already. But for slight tidyings, all that remains is to administer the existent basically good, by disjointed increments, into the ever basically better."

A very Babel. And for those same reasons. A confusion of tongues—no gift!—as we bring to Zenith the Faustian thrust, the inherent insanity at the very core's core of our Civilization, or drop in despair into solitary, solipsistic, nadirs of narcissism.³

No one is serious—or at least not beyond micro-scale—or, if serious, much beyond exemplary or reactionary desperadoism. And the seriousness is lacking—I fear I may have fostered the want of it in myself and others—because not yet is the water awash on the first-class decks, the waves breaking on the bridge, the helmsmen clearly enough holding but the Spinning Wheel, guiding nothing, awash now confessedly on a cognizably trackless sea. And not till then will we bethink or bestir ourselves, sundered in our severalty, no Movement afoot, no bonds forged between us in a familiar common struggle, no hammered-out ideas, no self-criticism, no precedent praxis, no sense of any historic or evolutionary whence or whither, not only anomic but antinomic, no shared canons of conduct, no common criteria for credibility, no trust, none warranted, no structure, pattern or order, either powerless under dictatorship or in the last desperate throes of the *sauve-qui-peut* non-system that is the system of our aggregate—not collective—lives. But when the first-class passengers note the water in the first-class cabins, it will be too late even for the present merchants in confusion to orient themselves, for in organizing the precedent disorganization, compounding the present confusion, they will have—have, likely—lost even those last landmarks that distinguish anything from anything else.

This time I will not say "Unless..."

For I do not know any "Unless..."

I know that for brief times, on small scales, in scattered places, good people, as far as an arm will reach, still do good things. But no longer in coalescence, no more guided for more than a hand's breadth or a moment's time by a reasonably constant, coherent vision, a corresponding theory, a praxis undergirding and overlying it.

³See Peter Marin, "The New Narcissism," *Harper's Magazine*, pp. 45-56, October, 1975.

Here and there a star appears to wink in a cold, relentless, dark without line, form or limit. There is a little warmth to live by—at least a little while.⁴ It is priceless and beyond praising for it is all there is.

But what is enough for private comfort does not suffice for the birth or maintenance of the

public good. And for that, even the best and the brightest, seem to have no map, no compass, no means of devising either, nor agreed collaborative scheme to find such means or bring them into being.

"It is not we alone, it is not the house, it is not the city . . . but the world . . ."

⁴This *Festschrift*, from these friends, and that multitude from whom they have sampled, and so generously yielded, is a signal from those scattered—choose your figure—isles or stars.